B.E. Schneider  "A Visionary"

Of all the things I’ve learned in my masters class and have always agreed with most, being a visionary is the most appealing. If we don’t imagine, live and teach in new and profound ways we might as well go along life’s highway in the slow lane. We will certainly be passed up by most of our peers.

Envision the year 2002. It’s not that far down the path of life. I will have eleven years of teaching under my belt by then - a well-seasoned veteran in the field of Visual Arts. I teach at a new vocational High School in a middle to lower socioeconomic neighborhood. My students are from many different cultures which makes for great diversity in our knowledge base. The school I teach in is an Arts-based school and we have been able to gain support from similar types of businesses in our community. Some of the businesses that support our school are local architects, graphic design companies, computer manufacturers and software companies. Since the main thrust of these companies is art or computer design and software, we have integrated an innovative program utilizing seminars, workshops, and internships developed for our students. We have a big emphasis on group/team work and learning from each other.

We have a person on our staff whose primary duty is to solicit financial aid for our school. She or he is given one day a month to solicit community support. This contact is not only to gain financial support but is also important to educate the community about our school. There is also a team of educators on our staff involved in writing grants to help support our programs. In the year 2001 the lottery was revised to enable schools in California to actually receive additional money other than the state allocation.

With the help of grants, community support, and lottery money we are now able to provide each student in our school a lap top computer. This also includes a service program provided by one of our computer manufacturers. We also have a full time technology troubleshooter on campus at all time. It is imperative to provide prompt and efficient support for our students and their computers.

Each class provides the necessary software for that particular curriculum. Some classes like painting, ceramics, drawing, silkscreen and photograph are designed in a pod style with a centrally located lab to provide additional facilities for developing student portfolios. This lab also has a trained technical support staff, consisting of one educator and one student assistant.

All classrooms come equipped with internet connections at each student desk, an LC Projector connected to the teachers computer, and the latest version of A N A, five printers and two scanners.

When our governor mandated class reduction across all grade levels, school became a more teachable situation. Now every class size is a maximum of 20.

Educators who desire to teach in this school must be enthusiastic about
keeping up with technology and new teaching strategies. We know how important it is to keep one step ahead of our students. Teachers are given one hour each day to do grade level and subject matter curriculum planning. somewhat like the watering hole theory Thornburg refers to in his article. It is also expected that each teacher will give one inservice training to the rest of the staff per school year relating to curriculum integration, problem solving, etc. Extra pay and a substitute instructor is provided for each teacher to attend two conferences per year.

As an extra bonus, Robert Von Oech will be speaking to the entire staff and student body on his book, “A Wack on the Side of the Head”.

Parent support is beneficial to the achievement of our students. We have online support for families who are not able to attend regular parent teacher conferences which are scheduled four times a year.

There are class web sites to provide information on all assignments, activities, events and general news updates about our school. Each student also has an e-mail address so the teacher can pass on information when a students is absent.

Our financial supporters not only provide us with financial support but they also provide internships that depict real world applications for our students. The combination of computer technology and the internship provided by outside corporations will give students the skills to be successful in a highly technical, competitive and computer based society.

Just imagine!